

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 07301 111958Z

72

ACTION EUR-25

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R 111650Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7483

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7301

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJ: LABOR SITUATION-GENERAL STRIKE CALLED FOR
DECEMBER 12

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN WAKE OF VARIOUS RECENT STRIKES
OVER "BREAD AND BUTTER" CONTRACT ISSUES, FIRST CLEARLY
POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED STRIKE CALL OF FALL SEASON HAS BEEN
ISSUED WITH APPEAL FOR NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE
DECEMBER 12. STRIKE HAS BEEN PREPARED LARGELY BY NEW
LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE OF COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS
COMMISSIONS, AND INVOLVES PARTICIPATION OF VARIOUS
CLANDESTINE GROUPS BESIDES COMMUNISTS, INCLUDING
RELUCTANT SUPPORT FROM MORE MODERATE AND DEMOCRATIC
OPPOSITION LABOR GROUPS WHO SOMEWHAT PESSIMISTIC OVER
STRIKE'S PROSPECTS. GENERAL STRIKE IS DESIGNED TO
DEMONSTRATE WORKERS COMMISSIONS RENEWED STRENGTH, TO
MANIFEST POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME AND ITS
REPRESSIVE LABOR POLICES, AND TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON
PENDING "CARABANCHEL TEN" TRIAL. PROSPECTS ARE THAT
GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT WILL BE A RELATIVE FAILURE, DESPITE
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT EXPECTED FROM CURRENTLY COMBATIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MADRID 07301 111958Z

STUDENT SECTOR. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSIDERABLE STRIKES AND LABOR DISPUTES, PARTICULARLY IN MADRID, THE BASQUE COUNTRY, ASTURIAS, PAMPLONA, AND BARCELONA, HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING PAST TWO MONTHS, NEARLY ALL RELATED TO NEGOTIATIONS FOR NEW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS MOST OF WHICH EXPIRE ON DECEMBER 31. THESE HAVE BEEN COMPOUNDED IN MANY CASES BY SUSPENSIONS AND DISMISSALS OF WORKERS FOR SUCH STRIKE ACTIVITY, AND IN ALL INSTANCES BY GENERAL WORKER PREOCCUPATION WITH RAPID RISE IN COST OF LIVING WHICH HAS INCREASED BY AN UNPRECEDENTED 15 PERCENT DURING 1973.

3. ONE OF MOST PROLONGED CURRENT STRIKES IS AT THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED HUNOSA COAL MINES IN ASTURIAS, WHERE A STRIKE OF SOME 5,000 MINERS IS NOW IN ITS FIFTH WEEK. NASTIEST OF RECENT STRIKES AND ONE OF FEW RESULTING IN VIOLENCE WAS STRIKE AT FASA-RENAULT AUTOMOBILE FACTORY IN VALLADOLID, WHERE 3,000 STRIKERS PROTESTING SLOW PACE OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN DAILY SILENT MARCHES TO CENTER OF CITY TO DRAMATIZE THEIR CAUSE, ONLY TO BE ENGAGED, ON DEC 5, IN A PITCHED BATTLE WITH POLICE IN WHICH SEVERAL WORKERS WERE INJURED (ONE SERIOUSLY) AND VARIOUS STRIKERS ARRESTED.

4. MOST RECENT STRIKES HAVE INVOLVED "BREAD AND BUTTER" ISSUES AND HAVE NOT BEEN POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED. HOWEVER, WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND OTHER GROUPS HAVE RECENTLY ISSUED CALL FOR NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE ON DECEMBER 12, WHICH STRIKE WILL BE STRICTLY POLITICAL IN NATURE.

5. ONE WORKER COMMISSION SOURCE SOLD LABATT THAT BASIC DECISIONS TO ATTEMPT GENERAL STRIKE DEC 12 WERE TAKEN AT TWO RECENT MEETINGS OF NEW NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF WORKERS COMMISSIONS HELD IN MADRID VICINITY DURING NOVEMBER, WHICH MEETINGS WERE NOT DETECTED BY POLICE. ACCORDING SOURCE, COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS WERE PLEASED THEY WERE ABLE TO HOLD TWO SUCH TOP-LEVEL MEETINGS UNDETECTED AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FORM NEW NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE AFTER PREVIOUS COMMITTEE, LED BY COMMUNIST WORKER MARCELINO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MADRID 07301 111958Z

CAMACHO AND OTHERS, WAS ARRESTED AT FAMOUS JUNE 1972 MEETING (THE TEN WORKERS COMMISSIONS LEADERS ARRESTED THEN WERE THE FAMOUS "CARABANCHEL TEN", WHO ARE STILL IN PRISON AWAITING TRIAL). NATIONWIDE DECEMBER 12 GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT WILL THUS PARTIALLY BE EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WORKERS COMMISSIONS, DESPITE SERIOUS 1972 LOSS OF "CARABANCHEL TEN" LEADERSHIP, IS STILL VERY MUCH IN BUSINESS WITH NEWLY RECONSTITUTED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

6. GENERAL STRIKE IS BILLED AS AN OPEN MANIFESTATION OF WORKER OPPOSITION TO REGIME AND ITS REPRESSIVE ACTIONS. IT IS PARTICULARLY DESIGNED, HOWEVER, TO CALL ATTENTION TO PLIGHT OF JAILED "CARABANCHEL TEN" WORKERS COMMISSIONS LEADERS, AND AS A PREVIEW OF WHAT WORKERS COMMISSIONS HOPE TO MOUNT WHEN "CARABANCHEL TEN" ARE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN "1001 CASE" (SO-CALLED BECAUSE CASE IS NUMBER 1001 ON COURT DOCKET), WHICH NOW EXPECTED TO BE HELD EARLY OR MID-JANUARY.

7. ALTHOUGH COMMUNISTS ARE PRINCIPAL ORGANIZERS, MOST OTHER RADICAL CLANDESTINE GROUPS, BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF WORKERS COMMISSIONS, ARE ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPANTS IN DECEMBER 12 GENERAL STRIKE PREPARATIONS, INCLUDING EXTREMISTS CATHOLIC ORT, TROTSKYITE LCR, AND MAOIST FRAP. HOWEVER, SOME OF MORE MODERATE AND DEMOCRATIC CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS SUCH AS SOCIALIST "YOUNG TURK" UGT AND CATHOLIC USO, ARE COOPERATING IN ATTEMPT WITH A MARKED LACK OF ENTHUSIASM AND ACTUALLY WERE OPPOSED TO CONVOCAION OF GENERAL STRIKE AT THIS TIME, BUT FELT OBLIGED TO GO ALONG RELUCTANTLY WITH WELL-ORCHESTRATED GROUNDSWELL. UGT AND USO POINT OUT THAT COMMUNIST-INSPIRED EFFORTS AT NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE HAVE ALWAYS PROVEN A FAILURE, THAT WORKERS CAN ONLY GENERALLY BE MOBILIZED OVER "BREAD AND BUTTER" ISSUES, AND THAT WORKERS UNLIKELY JEOPARDIZE NORMAL ONE-MONTH CHRISTMAS BONUSES BY ATTEMPTING GENERAL STRIKE AT THIS TIME.

8. FORECAST FOR DEC 12 NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE IS THAT IT IS LIKELY TO BE A FAILURE ALTHOUGH WORKERS COMMISSIONS MAY GET NUMBERS OF WORKERS TO STRIKE IN SPECIFIC LOCALITIES AND FACTORIES WHERE THEY HAVE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 MADRID 07301 111958Z

SUFFICIENT CONTROL. IN ADDITION, POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN AMPLY WARNED IN ADVANCE AND ARE WELL PREPARED TO CONTROL SITUATION AND PROMPTLY SUPPRESS ANY VIOLENCE. NONETHELESS, COMMUNISTS AND THEIR ALLIES FEEL GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPT WILL BE A RELATIVE SUCCESS EVEN IF WORKERS COMMISSIONS ARE ONLY ABLE TO MOBILIZE A MINIMUM OF 50,000 WORKERS NATIONWIDE, AND THAT WHATEVER THE OUTCOME IT WILL PROVIDE A BADLY NEEDED BOOST TO WORKERS COMMISSIONS MORALE.

9. WORKERS COMMISSIONS HAVE ALSO COORDINATED STRIKE PLANS WITH, AND ARE COUNTING ON SUPPORT FROM, UNIVERSITY STUDENT SECTOR. THEY ARE APT TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING OUT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SUPPORT OF DECEMBER 12 STRIKE THAN WITH WORKERS. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY

IN MADRID AND BARCELONA, ARE CURRENTLY IN HIGHLY COMBATIVE
MOOD DUE TO FREQUENT CAMPUS CLASHES WITH POLICE DURING
PAST TWO WEEKS.
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